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ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a computer salesman about his job. The following questions are answered: what a computer salesman does, why the person chose the field of employment, how the person found out about the job, what he does and doesn't like about it, what kind of training was needed, what the computer salesman does during a working week, his co-workers, the hours, and how the work contributes to society. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and a glossary listing 33 words is included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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Hazel Edwards

Workdays

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

a Computer Salesman

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Workdays

a day in the life of ....

a Computer Salesman

Name Liam Morrish

Aged 18

Workdays
a day in the life of...
a Computer Salesman

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WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

It's a sales job, reselling computer gear to the public and to *corporations*. Account *representative* is the name if you're selling to a large corporation.

WHAT DO YOU DO AT WORK?

A lot of my work is *telemarketing*. It's product *orientated*. You find out what the client needs, and try and find a machine that will suit their *application*.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?

Computers are a growth industry. Others such as printing are sunset industries. So it was a conscious decision to choose to work in an industry with expanding possibilities. When I was younger, it seemed a good way to earn good money.

WHAT'S YOUR CAT'S NAME?
LAPTOP...
WILL GOODWIN

It seemed very simple. Once you know what you're doing, everything is simple. Click this here and click that there. It's very competitive. There are fifty-three *Hewlett Packard* dealers in Victoria.

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT COMPUTERS?

At school I did a lot of science and maths but I was more English oriented. We had a computer at home and that got me involved. Although I left school at year 10, which was very young, I got in on the ground floor of a large company.

Once you're inside the computer industry, you can go anywhere because jobs are offered all over the place. From playing at home I learnt the most. My father buys a lot of computer equipment and the sales representative who visited him used to let me hang around. On Saturdays and in the holidays, he opened it up and showed me the inside of the computer. That was almost 'on the job' experience. That sales *rep* gave me guidance in what I was going to do.

... AND YOUR DOG...?
MEGABYTE!
WILL GOODWIN

HOW DID YOU GET EXPERIENCE?

Through my school holidays I'd tee up work experience. I used to work on a $15 hourly basis for a computer company in South Melbourne. When I left school at the end of year 10, I didn't have a specific job organised.

I was still looking around. I thought I was under qualified, but in sales they want good *relational* skills and a knowledge of the product.

HOW WOULD YOU USE THESE SKILLS IN SALES?

I can relate to the user because I don't use *technical jargon*. You need to understand the 'basics' of computers, such as what a printer is and what a keyboard does. Then, on the job, you learn the specifics of your product and its advantage. In sales you don't need to know everything, just the key points about your product.

Training is offered. You have the opportunity to go to Hewlett Packard and have their technicians train you, and they're very good. Or learn from experience in the industry. The products are very basic, so they don't change very much. A printer is a printer.

But Hewlett Packard's training is excellent. Often training courses are offered in subjects like the engine of a laser printer, or the range of *fonts* available.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DURING A WEEK?

Most mornings I arrive about 8.45, start at 9 o'clock and work until about 6 o'clock in the evening. Tuesday mornings we start earlier because we have a sales meeting. I make sales calls in the daytime and chase up quotations. On average there'd be 80 out-going phone calls in a week.

I also make personal deliveries of larger orders like the $14,000 plotter, a big draftmaster, which I personally installed last week. A school ordered a big laser printer and I delivered that too.

Because we have large advertisements in the Yellow Pages, we have many incoming phone calls. Lots of time is spent on the follow up paper work, checking the prices and finding what's good for the customer's needs. Sometimes I spend time in the showroom with people off the street explaining the advantages of our products, but that's pretty rare. Last week was spent chasing orders. From a *prospect* to a sale, the success rate is two out of five, while from a *qualified* person, the success rate is two in three.

You develop a good relationship with some *clients* and they might ask you to do some contract work for them on weekends. I've been asked to write an application to be logged onto a data base for service records.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR CO-WORKERS?

Very important. This is a very high pressure industry and you need the support of the right people. There's pressure to perform and pressure to bring in enough profit to keep the business going. There's a *high turnover* in our industry and people move around until they fit in exactly.

The office works as a group. There are sales staff and support staff. *Software* is so flexible, it can range from designing space rockets to just typing a document, and it's impossible to know about every *variation*. So you are reliant on others' experience. The client says, 'Help me' and if you don't know the answer you have to find out from others. So *colleagues* are very important.

ARE YOUR FRIENDS MOSTLY WORKMATES?

Some of my friends who are still studying are *contemplating* going into the computer industry. Others are tradesmen in the air conditioning industry. Most of my friendships were made at school.

WHAT TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN YOUR WORK PLACE HAVE AFFECTED YOU?

There are always product advancements. As soon as you buy a laser printer they're developing the next two. Small printing places have been put out of business by personal computers. Desktop publishing has *superseded* the small local printer who used to make a living printing *brochures* or providing photocopies. These are now sunset industries.

YOU WANT AN I.B.M. 486 P.C. X.T. WITH A V.G.A....?
ACTUALLY, I'M AFTER A TURBO CHARGED PACKARD WITH A LEOPARDSKIN HARD DRIVE
Will Goodman

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The power of the *PC* is *equivalent* to the small mini computer which used to power a whole floor. These are spinoffs from space technology. Because it is high tech., people working in the computer industry are seen as *unapproachable* and holding highly specialised knowledge.

That's why it's important to be able to relate to the user and say, 'Hey, I just play with the keyboards.' Occasionally you'll be asked a highly technical question such as 'What are the *specifications* of this chip inside this motherboard in this location?' So I'll say, 'I don't know the answer to that. Let's call H.P. together and find out.' However you do need to know a little about the inside.

WHAT MIGHT CHANGE IN YOUR WORKPLACE IN THE FUTURE?

Computers will increase 10% in popularity over the next two years and have a larger and larger effect on ordinary life. This could be good and bad. Technicians and programmers will still be needed.

But the bigger companies will control products such as televisions, *walkmans* and computer gear. Computers are a growth industry. Companies are making more and more profits and offering more *opportunities* for advancement.

WHAT'S THE WORK LIKE?

The hours are good. In my last company, most nights I had to take home quotes and proposals to type. Here the secretary does the quotes after I sketch them out. Sharing the load makes the work quicker.

There are only six hours a day you can talk to people and get a good response. Over the phone especially. You can't ring them at midnight. Payment is commission basis. The harder you work, the more you are rewarded.

There is a base salary with the *incentive* of an individual commission on top. There are different commission systems.

One is based on achievements over a certain rate. If you don't reach that level, there is no commission. Decisions relate to how much discount should be offered. The manager gives the ultimate yes or no.

WHAT ARE THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT YOUR WORK?

Seeing a happy client with a brand new piece of equipment which will make their job easier. Then they give you a big cheque which you pass onto your manager which makes him happy too. Afterwards you get a reward, the commission cheque.

WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE FOR COMPUTER SALESPEOPLE?

In the future, computers will control everything. Opportunities are endless. Personally, my next step will be direct handling of corporate accounts. Hewlett Packard will give me a share of Telecom, BHP and CRA.

There are thousands of opportunities within these companies. There isn't just one purchasing officer. These will be my companies and no-one from Hewlett Packard will deal with those corporations, this will be my patch, a specified area.

There will be large *volumes*. Key opportunities will pass by like twenty laser printers. Customers will be regular accounts and so there will be less work. After establishing large, steady accounts, I'd like to start a partnership.

DOES YOUR WORK HELP OTHERS?

The computer industry doesn't help Australia's trade *deficit* because of the Taiwanese, American and Japanese companies involved. However, 20% Australian sales tax is paid. Computers make peoples' work easier and more efficient.

It also helps educate people. I'm a sales adviser, assisting people when they're looking at the high tech. world of computers. I guide them to the products which are available and find out what they need.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE ENTERING THIS AREA OF WORK?

Be sure that sales is what you want. Make sure that you enjoy talking to people a lot. Putting up with some people requires patience but you do meet a lot of nice people too. Be patient and helpful. Never lie to your customer. Sell good products. Be prepared to put in some hard work. And then be prepared to reap the benefits.

Once you're in the industry, whether you're a storeman, unpacking boxes on Saturdays, or setting up the showroom, you can go up from there. A salesperson can become a programmer. Computers are a growth industry.

WHO DO YOU THINK CONTRIBUTES THE MOST IN OUR SOCIETY?

It could be salespeople. The good ones do have a genuine concern about their client. They are not just selling a product, they are selling a solution to a problem.

IT MIGHT BE
USER FRIENDLY YOUNG MAN
– BUT IT HAD BETTER NOT
GET TOO FAMILIAR!!
NILL GOODWIN

A good product and a good price will help a person to do their job better.

Law enforcement people are important in our society. Big business men and politicians are also influential.

WHAT ABOUT COMPUTER CRIME?

Some see computer crime as a game rather than a crime. Those illegally transferring funds on a keyboard at home don't *equate* it to robbing a bank. They just push a button. Because there's no violence, they think it isn't a crime. But transferring a million dollars is a crime. It's theft. And they can be found out.

Piracy is a difficult one. Copying disks can be combated by putting lower prices on software. Maybe the kids who are software pirates can be punished, not by prison sentences or fines but by requiring them to work packing boxes at the software company at the weekends. It might give them a better understanding of the *implications* of what they are doing.

GLOSSARY

corporations	*a large business*
representative	*title of employee. Later refered to as 'Rep'*
telemarketing	*using the telephone to sell a product*
oriented	*focused*
application work	*particular or special*
Hewlett Packard	*brand name of a computer*
relational	*communicating or talking*
technical jargon	*work slang*
fonts	*writing types and styles*
quotations	*prices given to customer*
prospect	*enquiry*
qualified	*suitable or authorised*
clients	*customers*
high turnover	*regularly changing*
software	*computer program*
variation	*different versions*
colleagues	*workers in the same industry*
contemplating	*thinking*
superseded	*taken the place of or outdated*

GLOSSARY CONTINUED

brochures	*printed advert on a single page*
PC	*'Personal Computer'*
equivalent	*equal to*
unapproachable	*distant*
specialised	*skilled*
specification s	*set of details*
walkmans	*portable radios with earsets*
opportunities	*chances or openings*
incentive	*reward*
volumes	*amounts*
deficit	*debt*
equate	*liken*
implications	*the effect of their actions*

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